

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

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P R 271703Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1986

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMCONSUL QUEBEC UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 OTTAWA 2561

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF QUEBEC PROVINCIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

REF: STATE 209583

POLITICAL SCENE ON ELECTION EVE--(SUMMARY)

1. GENERAL PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN QUEBEC NEXT MONDAY, OCTOBER 29. THOUGH RECENT POLLS SUGGEST THAT PREMIER BOURASSA'S LIBERAL PARTY POPULAR SUPPORT MAY HAVE SLIPPED, NO ONE SEEMS TO DOUBT THAT LIBERALS WILL BE RETURNED WITH PLURALITY (35 PERCENT OR MORE) OF POPULAR VOTE AND MAJORITY OF SEATS IN 110-MEMBER PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY. MAJOR ELECTORAL QUESTION IS WHETHER THE SEPARATIST PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ), WHICH GAINED 23 PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE BUT ONLY 7 SEATS IN 1970, CAN BECOME THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION IN THE NEXT LEGISLATURE. THE PARTI CREDITISTE, DESPITE VIGOROUS TUB-THUMPING BY LEADER DUPUIS, HAS NOT AROUSED ENTHUSIASM EXPECTED EARLIER AND MAY LOSE SOME OF ITS 12 PERCENT OF THE 1970 VOTE. THE CONSERVATIVE UNION NATIONALE (UN) IS PRACTICALLY DEFUNCT AND IS EXPECTED TO LOSE MOST

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OF THE TWENTY PERCENT ITN ON IN 1970. THE PQ CANNOT

BUT PROFIT FROM SUCH AN OUTCOME. EVEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT IT SHOULD NOT BECOME THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION IN THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, IT IS EMERGING AS SECOND MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL FORCE IN QUEBEC. PROSPECT RAISES POTENTIALLY GRAVE ISSUES FOR QUEBEC, FOR CANADIAN CONFEDERATION, AND IN MID OR LONG-TERM FOR US.

2. BASIC ISSUE: FEDERALISM VS SEPARATISM

AMCONGEN QUEBEC HAS PROVIDED GOOD ANALYSES OF ISSUES AT STAKE AND PARTY POSITIONS ON THEM. BASIC ISSUE IN WHAT IS INCREASINGLY A DIRECT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN LIBERALS AND RENE LEVESQUE'S PQ REMAINS THAT OF FEDERALISM VS SEPARATISM. VIRTUALLY ALL FRANCOPHONE QUEBECKERS (80 PERCENT OF PROVINCIAL POPULATION) ARE "QUEBEC NATIONALISTS" IN SOME MEASURE WHO FAVOR EITHER (1) "SPECIAL STATUS" FOR QUEBEC WITHIN CONFEDERATION OR (2) INDEPENDENCE (SEPARATION FROM CANADA). THEY CAN AGREE AT LEAST ON MORE AUTONOMY OR GREATER POWERS FOR QUEBEC, AT OTTAWA'S EXPENSE, IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD AND ENERGIZE THE "FRENCH FACT." EXTREME NATIONALISTS ARE SEPARATISTS, WHO THEMSELVES CAN BE DEMOCRATIC, AUTHORITARIAN (MARXIST OR FASCIST), TERRORIST (CF. FLQ), ROMANTIC, ETC. LIBERAL PARTY ITSELF HAS EXCELLENT NATIONALIST HISTORY, HAVING INTRODUCED "QUIET REVOLUTION" IN '60'S WHICH RESULTED IN EXTRACTION OF SUBSTANTIAL NEW POWERS AND REVENUES FROM OTTAWA. MANY NATIONALISTS SUPPORT LIBERALS OR OTHER MODERATE, FEDERALIST PARTIES ON GROUND THEY CAN NEGOTIATE MOST EFFECTIVELY AND PROFITABLY WITH OTTAWA. BUT APPEAL OF FIRST PROVINCE-WIDE SEPARATIST PARTY (PQ) HAS BEEN GROWING APACE SINCE MID-'60'S WITH ITS OWN EFFORTS TO APPEAR SAFE AND RESPECTABLE BY WORKING WITHIN THE SYSTEM. PQ LEADER LEVESQUE HAS SO FAR WEATHERED TRADITIONAL DIVISIONS WITHIN ANY PARTY HAVING REVOLUTION AT HEART WHICH WILL BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TO BRIDGE UNLESS HE CAN DEMONSTRATE SUCCESS OF HIS RESTRAINED STRATEGY

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BY CONTINUING GROWTH AND ELECTORAL GAINS.

3. DISPARITY BETWEEN FEDERALISM OF LIBERALS AND SEPARATION OF PQ HAS NOT BEEN AS SHARP IN '73 AS IN '70 CAMPAIGN. BOURASSA HAS STRESSED THE UNARGUABLE ECONOMIC GAINS MADE BY QUEBEC SINCE 1970 - OMITTING TO MENTION THAT THOSE ARE IN SOME MEASURE ATTRIBUTABLE TO CONCERN

IN OTTAWA ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF SEPARATION
AND INCREASED FEDERAL ATTENTION TO THE PROVINCE AS A RESULT.
LEVESQUE FOR HIS PART HAS MUTED HIS RADICAL
SEPARATIST STAND STATING THAT INSTEAD OF SEPARATING
QUEBEC FROM CANADA UPON ASSUMING POWER, HE WOULD
FORM A PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT WITH MANDATE ASSUMED
TO "NEGOTIATE" WITH OTTAWA AND THE OTHER PROVINCES
OVER THE FOLLOWING TWO YEARS AND THEN TO HOLD A
REFERENDUM ON A CONSTITUTION FOR AN INDEPENDENT
QUEBEC. THE PQ HAS PRODUCED A "BUDGET FOR THE
YEAR ONE" OF AN "INDEPENDENT QUEBEC" WHICH, IN
ADDITION TO SEEKING TO DEMONSTRATE THAT AN INDE-
PENDENT QUEBEC WOULD BE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE, INCLUDES
WELFARE MEASURES ATTRACTIVE TO LABOR AND OTHER SEGMENTS
OF SOCIETY DISSATISFIED WITH MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD
LIBERAL POSITIONS. THE CREDITISTES HAVE PRESENTED A
HODGE-PODGE PLATFORM OF 272 PLANKS, GENERALLY
CONSERVATIVE AND APPEALING TO RURAL CONSTITUENCIES.
THE UN APPEARS, AS AMCONGEN QUEBEC SUGGESTS, TO BE
A "SLUSH FUND IN SEARCH OF A PARTY." BOURASSA
EMERGES AS THE LEADER WHO CAN GET THE MOST OUT OF
OTTAWA. LEVESQUE IS THE PRINCIPAL PROPONENT OF THE
THEORY THAT QUEBEC CAN DO BETTER BY ITSELF, WITH ONLY
A BIT OF FRIENDLY CONDUCT AND COOPERATION FROM OTTAWA
AND THE REST OF CANADA.

4. ELECTORATE--PQ SUPPORT IS MIXED MAINLY BETWEEN
YOUNG INTELLECTUALS--ITS UNIVERSITY CONSTITUENCY IS
GENERALLY SEPARATIST--AND LABOR GROUPS, ALTHOUGH
SEPARATIST SENTIMENT IS STRONGER AMONG LABOR LEADERS
THAN THE RANK AND FILE. LIBERAL STRENGTH IS LARGELY
PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS, AND BOURASSA CAN COUNT
ON MOST OF THE 20 PERCENT ENGLISH-SPEAKING MINORITY.
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ONE PROBLEM FOR THE PQ IS THAT ITS STRENGTH IS IN
AREAS WHERE LIBERALS ARE ALSO STRONG, ACCOUNTING TO
SOME DEGREE FOR CURRENT DISPARITY BETWEEN PQ POPULAR
VOTE AND REPRESENTATION IN ASSEMBLY. BUT RE-
DISTRICTING OF CONSTITUENCIES BEFORE THIS ELECTION
IS EXPECTED TO REDUCE GAP IN SEATS HELD.

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1987

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMCONSUL QUEBEC UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 OTTAWA 2561

5. ANALYSIS

THE PQ APPEARS TO BE GAINING STRENGTH. AS OFFICIAL OPPOSITION, IT WOULD ASSUME GREATER RESPECTABILITY AND CREDIBILITY (DAMAGED SOMEWHAT BY SEPARATIST VIOLENCE IN AUTUMN 1970). FURTHER, IN PROPOSING MORE STATIST INDUSTRIAL, SOCIAL, AND WELFARE REFORMS, THE PQ PROVIDES A POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE TO LIBERALS IN ADDITION TO ITS MORE DIRECT APPEAL TO FRENCH-CANADIAN SEPARATIST SENTIMENT. IT IS DEBATABLE, HOWEVER, HOW FAR THE PQ CAN GO IF SEPARATISM SHOULD BE ITS MAIN APPEAL. THE PQ WILL CLAIM VICTORY IF IT BECOMES OFFICIAL OPPOSITION OR INCREASES ITS POPULAR VOTE OVER 1970. LIBERALS WILL DECLARE REJECTION OF SEPARATISM IF PQ VOTE KEPT BELOW 30 PERCENT.

6. BUT EVEN SHOULD THE PQ REACH 30 PERCENT, IT IS UNCLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT THE PQ COULD INCREASE ITS SUPPORT MUCH BEYOND THAT FIGURE. POLITICALLY, IT IS A HARDER ROAD TO GO FROM 30 TO 40 PERCENT THAN IT IS FROM 20 TO 30 PERCENT. A STRONG ECONOMY, WITH BENEFICIARIES ACHIEVING EVER LARGER STAKES IN IT, COULD DO MUCH TO SLOW DOWN SEPARATIST GROWTH. POLITICAL, CONFIDENTIAL

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ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL GAINS, BEING MADE BY QUEBEC (ALONG WITH OTHER PROVINCES) AT OTTAWA'S EXPENSE AND LEADING GRADUALLY TO A LOOSER CANADIAN

FEDERATION, MAY APPEAR TO MEET THE NEEDS OF MORE QUEBECKERS FOR ENHANCEMENT OF THEIR "SPECIAL STATUS," STILL WITHIN CONFEDERATION. THE FEAR OF GOING IT ALONE, WITHOUT THE ADVANTAGES OF CANADA'S MODERN NATIONHOOD AND WITH THE UNCERTAINTIES OF LIFE IN A KRAAL SURROUNDED BY ANGLOPHONE NORTH AMERICANS, MAY ALSO CAUSE OTHERS TO HESITATE BEFORE OPTING FOR COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE LIBERALS TO EXPLOIT THESE ANXIETIES, BUT THEY CAN TRY TO MEET THEM AND PREEMPT MORE NATIONALIST GROUND. IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT IF THE PQ BECOMES THE SECOND STRONGEST PARTY IN QUEBEC, THE LIBERALS AS THE GOVERNMENT PARTY WILL HAVE TO WIN AND WIN FOREVER TO KEEP CANADA INTACT. BUT WITH THEIR MULTI-PARTY EXPERIENCE, CANADIANS ARE HARDY AND INGENIOUS POLITICAL TYPES. IF THE LIBERALS DON'T SURVIVE AS PARTY NUMBER ONE, ANOTHER MODERATE PARTY OR A NEW COALESCENCE OF MODERATE FORCES COULD EMERGE. THE PQ ON ITS SIDE CAN OF COURSE MODERATE ITS OWN PLATFORM, BUT ALWAYS WITH THE RISK OF LOSING ITS RADICAL ELEMENTS.

7. DIRECTIONS AND MEANING FOR US

SEPARATISM WILL GO ON, WHATEVER THE RESULTS OF THE OCTOBER 29 ELECTION. CANADA WILL NOT, SHOULD SEPARATISM GROW AND ONE DAY SUCCEED IN QUEBEC (OR ELSEWHERE). A DIVIDED OR BALKANIZED CANADA WOULD NOT BE IN OUR INTEREST. RIVAL STATES TO THE NORTH, COMPETING FOR US (AND OTHERS') ATTENTION, WOULD MEAN IMMENSE NEW PROBLEMS OF ALL SORTS FOR US (ECONOMIC, DEFENCE, ETC.) EVEN ASSUMING THERE WERE TO BE FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS SHARING MOST OF OUR INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO ROOM, EXCEPT POSSIBLY IN ENCOURAGING INVESTMENT IN QUEBEC (A DIFFICULT THING TO DO IN ANY EVENT), FOR CONSTRUCTIVE US INFLUENCE IN THIS INTERNAL

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DOMESTIC MATTER. IT IS A FACT THAT RELATIONS WITH THE US ARE NOT AN ISSUE IN THE QUEBEC ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AND THAT IS THE WAY WE WOULD MOST WISH IT TO BE AND SO CONTINUE.

8. IN RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY'S TELEGRAM (REFTEL) ON ANALYSIS, QUALITY OF REPORTING, AND FREE EXPRESSION, I HAVE SOLICITED MY COUNTRY TEAM'S VIEW ON THE ASSESSMENT IMMEDIATELY ABOVE REGARDING SEPARATISM'S IMPLICATIONS FOR US POLICY. WE ARE

IN UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT.

9. BUT ON THE FUTURE COURSE OR SUCCESS OF SEPARATISM IN QUEBEC, WE HAVE ONLY A PARTIAL CONSENSUS, ONE NEITHER SO ABSOLUTE NOR SO CERTAIN. WE AGREE THAT QUEBEC IS UNLIKELY TO SEPARATE IN THE NEAR OR MID-TERM. SOME, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A 50-50 CHANCE OF SEPARATION IN ANOTHER DECADE, WHILE OTHERS BELIEVE THAT EVEN THEN THE QUEBEC ELECTORATE WILL RESIST TAKING THE TERMINAL STEP OUT OF CANADA. WE HAVE AT LEAST ONE DISSENTING VIEW AT OUR CONSULATE GENERAL IN MONTREAL WHICH HOLDS THAT CONTINUING PQ GROWTH IS INEVITABLE AND THAT THE PQ WILL ACHIEVE A LEGISLATIVE MAJORITY BY 1981 (AFTER TWO MORE ELCTIONS) WITHOUT DILUTION OF ITS SEPARATIST OBJECTIVES. THIS VIEWER NOTES THAT A PQ CAPTURE OF 30 PERCENT OF THE QUEBEC VOTE WOULD ACTUALLY REPRESENT 40 PERCENT OF THE FRANCOPHONE VOTE, A FORMIDABLE MINORITY LEVESQUE WOULD BE ABLE TO ADVERTISE WITH EFFECT. THE LAST POLL OF MONTREAL'S PUBLIC OPINION INSTITUTE (QUEBEC TEL 171) SHOWED 25 PERCENT OF VOTERS UNDECIDED, A FACTOR SOMEWHAT MORE ENCOURAGING TO THE UNDERDOG PQ THAN THE POWERFUL LIBERAL PARTY. BUT MOST IMPORTANT, TODAY'S YOUTH IN QUEBEC IS CONSTANTLY BEING BRAIN-WASHED BY SEPARATIST OR SEPARATIST-INCLINED TEACHERS.

10. I AM ASKING THE TWO POSTS IN QUEBEC TO REPORT THEIR INDEPENDENT VIEWS, INCLUDING DIFFERING ONES, DIRECTLY TO THE DEPARTMENT FOLLOWING PUBLICATION
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OF THE ELECTION RESULTS NEXT WEEK. A FURTHER EMBASSY ASSESSMENT WILL ALSO BE PREPARED.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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